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## Government House Responds to U.S. DOJ Lawsuit Over VIPD Firearms Licensing Practices

The Bryan administration says it is reviewing the U.S. DOJ complaint with the Virgin Islands DOJ and VIPD, affirms commitment to constitutional rights and public safety, and says the matter will be addressed through the legal process.

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**Governor Albert Bryan Jr. By. REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRPAHY, V.I. CONSORTIUM.**

The Government of the Virgin Islands has responded to a federal civil lawsuit filed by the U.S. Department of Justice challenging the territory’s firearms licensing practices, saying it takes the allegations “seriously” and will address them through the legal process as it works to protect constitutional rights and public safety.

The Department of Justice on Dec. 16 filed a complaint in federal court against the Government of the Virgin Islands, the Virgin Islands Police Department and Police Commissioner Mario Brooks in his official capacity. According to the DOJ's lawsuit, the firearms licensing scheme in the territory violates the Second Amendment by imposing unreasonable delays, unconstitutional conditions, and maintaining a "proper cause" standard that the U.S. Supreme Court has deemed invalid.

Government House issued a statement in response to media inquiries, acknowledging the filing and outlining the administration's position. "Government House is aware of a complaint filed Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2025, by the U.S. Department of Justice against the Government of the Virgin Islands, the Virgin Islands Police Department and Police Commissioner Mario Brooks in his official capacity," the statement said.

The statement noted that the V.I. Department of Justice is reviewing the federal complaint in coordination with the VIPD. It also stressed the administration's commitment to "protecting constitutional rights while maintaining public safety," and indicated that further comment would be limited because the matter is now before the courts. "Because this matter is pending litigation, we will not comment further at this time," the statement added.

In its complaint, the U.S. Department of Justice contends that the Virgin Islands' system for issuing firearms licenses imposes barriers inconsistent with Supreme Court precedent and the Second Amendment. The lawsuit notes that many applicants have reported that the Virgin Islands Police Department takes an unreasonable amount of time to decide gun permit applications and imposes conditions not supported by constitutional standards. Among the practices cited are requirements that applicants install bolted-in gun safes prior to receiving a permit and continued enforcement of a "proper cause" standard, which the U.S. Supreme Court struck down in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen*.

Assistant Attorney General Harmeet K. Dhillon of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division said the new Second Amendment Section brought the lawsuit to ensure that applicants receive timely decisions without unconstitutional obstruction. "This Civil Rights Division will protect the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens," Dhillon said, stressing that the lawsuit seeks to bring the Virgin Islands Police Department into compliance with federal constitutional standards.

U.S. Attorney Adam F. Sleeper for the District of the Virgin Islands echoed the DOJ's concerns, saying that current firearms licensing laws and practices in the territory "are inconsistent with the Second Amendment" and that the lawsuit aims to uphold the rights of law-abiding residents to bear arms.

The DOJ complaint also asserts that residents have complained about unconstitutional and unreasonable home searches conducted as part of the permitting process. The lawsuit highlights that despite the Supreme Court's ruling invalidating "proper cause" standards, the Virgin Islands continues to apply a similar requirement that allows law enforcement to deny permits unless applicants demonstrate a special need.

The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court of the Virgin Islands, and the DOJ is inviting current and prospective gun owners who believe they have been subjected to unconstitutional delays, conditions, or practices to submit complaints to the Civil Rights Division's Second Amendment Section.

With both the federal complaint and the Government House response now public, attention will turn to how the litigation unfolds in court. The Bryan-Roach Administration has framed its approach as a defense of constitutional rights and public safety, even as it prepares to mount a legal defense to the claims raised by the Department of Justice.

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